

11 MAY 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Operations

FROM : The 26 April Group

SUBJECT : Summary of 26 April Meeting

1. In late April, at the request of the DDO, eleven officers were selected by their divisions to meet with the DDO to discuss with him issues precipitated by the Stockwell open letter. The meeting took place on 26 April and was a lengthy, wide-ranging, and free exchange on a wide variety of topics of mutual concern. The group was pleased to have been invited to present its collective and individual views, and very much appreciated both the time the DDO made available to meet with the group and the lively interest he displayed during the meeting. A review of the major points raised and summary of the main issues discussed during the meeting follows. Also attached is an outline of a proposed agenda submitted to the DDO by the group, and a list of the officers who took part in the meeting.

2. At the outset, the group sought to establish several key points:

a. The group itself was composed of officers with individual views to meet with the DDO at his invitation and at the direction of their respective divisions.

b. Without attempting complete consensus, the group conveyed to Mr. Wells its collective impression of morale within the DO and of problems of concern within the officer corps.

c. The group wished Mr. Wells to understand that the views and attitudes described by the group are believed to reflect accurately the views, attitudes and perceptions of large numbers of the officer corps.

3. The first area covered was personnel management:

a. Assignments: There is a widespread impression that assignments depend heavily on personal contacts, i.e., "who you know." This is believed to play a significant role in large numbers of assignments, including

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the selection of chiefs of station. No one says personal ties should not exist or even play a role in identifying able personnel, but personal ties should not be a determining factor.

Mr. Wells agreed that improvements should be made in the assignment process. A number of possibilities were discussed. Vacancies, including a short profile of the position (language requirements, grade level, duties, etc.) could be publicized for reference when submitting FRQ's and HRQ's and could be made available to field stations on microfiche. The assignment process could be centralized, and some form of panel system be instituted for assignments, with greater latitude given to officers at all levels to cross division lines for assignments. Such measures would enable a more systematic approach to career development within the Directorate.

b. Promotions: There is a conviction that promotions are slower in the DO compared with those in other Agency directorates (DA and DI) and in other government agencies, notably, the Department of State. The DDO agreed to look into this as well as the lack of timely reporting by the Directorate on promotions. Publication of statistics and summaries and of general profiles of the officers promoted was recommended.

The group recommended that the findings of promotion panels be final. Mr. Wells expressed concern regarding the limitations such action would place on the DDO's authority over Directorate personnel.

The group urged Mr. Wells to seek ways of enabling highly qualified operations officers to advance in grade without having to assume management responsibilities and serve in the managerial hierarchy. Such a process would recognize that there are officers who excel as case officers and should be recognized for that ability.

The improvement of the overall promotion rate would depend on other factors such as early implementation of selection out and retirement policies which were discussed separately.

c. Selection Out: The Directorate does not apply the selection-out process effectively, if at all. This is

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particularly true of those officers in middle and upper-level ranks who have lost much of their utility to the Agency but who occupy positions blocking the advancement of more able officers. The group recommended strongly that "lower five percent" selection out be implemented at all levels.

The group further recommended that a five-year probationary period be established for new operations officers and that a panel meet at the conclusion of the period to determine whether such officers should be retained in the service. Mr. Wells agreed.

Finally, it was recommended that the DDO use personal rank assignments (PRA) and other available managerial tools in an effort to weed out officers who are no longer making a worthwhile contribution to the service.

d. Retirement: The recent pay raise for supergrades has played a major role in slowing down retirements. This will result in a further "graying of the Directorate." One study indicates that by 1980, if hiring continues at the present rate, only three percent of the officers in the Directorate will be under the age of 30. The officer corps does not see any effort by management to streamline the Directorate to overcome this problem. Various approaches to this problem were discussed, including implementation of the selection-out process, a fixed length of service for retirement eligibility (such as 20 years) without regard to age, and new legislation to establish a mandatory retirement age (as recently established by the FBI).

e. Impartial Review Panel: The group recommended an automatic impartial review of all officers at the time of their earliest retirement eligibility to expedite retirement of those officers who are no longer making significant contribution to the mission of the Directorate.

4. The other major areas of concern to the officer corps are leadership and professionalism:

The Vietnam War, the post-Watergate atmospherics in Washington, and other developments in our society have impacted on all of us, strongly affecting our perceptions and attitudes.

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The CIA, and the DO in particular, have and will continue to bear the brunt of heavy sustained criticism and attack. In 1977, the officer corps feels that the leadership of the Agency and of the Directorate is so preoccupied with coping with these attacks from without that it has neither the time nor the energy to cope with the real problems within the Directorate itself. This apparent absence of managerial attention to matters within the Directorate is interpreted, rightly or wrongly, to reflect a lack of concern, and this has contributed to the erosion of esprit de corps, the beginning of a decline in professionalism, and the growth of a "me first" attitude among officers. Several specific areas bearing on leadership and professionalism were discussed:

a. Failure of Leadership: The failure of the Administration or of the Congress to speak out favorably on the work of the Agency, specifically of the Directorate itself, is at least one cause of general anxiety about the future of the Agency and the Directorate. There is also a sense within the officer corps that the mission of the Directorate is not being made clear to the members of the new Administration or even to the newly appointed Director of Central Intelligence; i.e., the word is not reaching the top about what we really do, and how and why we do it.

At the same time, there are serious problems of vertical communication within the DO. Officers are often forced to base their understanding of what is happening at senior levels within the Directorate on Headquarters' rumors or press exposes. Similarly, senior levels are often unaware of the mood or concerns of officers at middle and lower levels. One measure of this problem was the need to constitute the present group to convey dissatisfactions and concerns prevalent at working levels of the DO.

b. Erosion of Professionalism: Professional capabilities within the Directorate are as high as ever, but the DO is threatened by a decline in dedication, commitment, and initiative within the officer corps, by the belief that the leadership no longer cares or has the time to address itself to problems within the Directorate. The widespread use of poor tradecraft in the field and the steady deterioration of language capabilities are evidence of this erosion.

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5. Additional items discussed with Mr. Wells included:

a. Staffs and Bureaucratic Layering: The DO officer engaged in operations work feels he is the bottom of an inverted pyramid and must address himself not only to substantive matters but very often, and with great urgency, to a melange of non-command channel staffs above and around him. At division and DO levels there have been created as focal points for management a number of staffs which apparently also exist, at least in part, to accommodate excess personnel. These staffs often impede effective communication and management at all levels.

b. Managers/Management: The Directorate should provide greater training for officers in management, and should streamline its own management practices and organization. Independent professional management consultant advice or services may be required.

c. Grievance System: The office of the Inspector General is believed to be part of "the establishment," more interested in keeping the lid on than in dealing with specific allegations brought before it. Doubts that it represents a true privacy channel for grievances were detailed. The fact that IG Staff officers must continually return to the area divisions for future assignments makes true impartiality difficult.

d. Delegation of Authority: An increasing number of basic operational decisions must be referred up through the command channel for decision. Too many decisions are required of too few people, often with considerable delay in the decision process. This creates the appearance of indecisiveness and contributes to a deterioration of decision-making skills at middle-management levels.

e. Discipline: Most officers can identify instances of needless intelligence or managerial weakness in supervisory management, both at Headquarters and in the field. Cases are commonly known of officers who have committed serious breaches of professional and personal standards of conduct, and yet have gone on to other, often more important, assignments. Reprimands at Senior levels are virtually unknown. There are station chiefs who are widely known to be ineffective, and yet, move effortlessly from choice post to choice post. This erodes morale, discipline, and standards within the Directorate.

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6. In summary, it can be fairly stated that most, if not all, of the problems raised by the group for discussion are problems which have existed for some time within the DO, and that many of these same problems are not unique to the DO, but are problems which must be confronted by most large organizations, public or private, when changing circumstances require changes in personnel and other management systems. Discussion urged upon the DO a consideration that times have changed, and that new solutions to a whole range of familiar problems must be sought and implemented by senior DO management. The need for this is reinforced by the increasing openness of the DO to external review of operational performance, and increasing requirements for DO resource allocation justification.

Attachments:

- Summary
- Agenda
- Review
- Participants

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